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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an overview of interventions that schools can use to enhance the psychological and social development of children in a desegregated school environment. Five remedies, designed to meet children's psychological needs in desegregated schools, are first defined and then analyzed for specific interventions appropriate at the school or classroom level. Self-esteem may be improved by seven interventions, including reducing social comparisons and interpersonal competition among students. Achievement motivation may be enhanced through such means as offering attainable but challenging goals to students, while coping skills are aided by stressing students' strengths. Vocational aspirations and social skills are also necessary in school settings and are developed by interventions such as ascertaining students' interests and encouraging cooperation. From a list of 6 kinds of desirable school integration practices and 13 school climate characteristics, a 9-step improvement process for school integration--provided in an appendix--also helps put classroom interventions in larger perspective. (JW)

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A RESEARCH REPORT

THE EFFECTS OF SCHOOL DESEGREGATION ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, MOTIVATION, AND SOCIAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT: A REVIEW OF RESEARCH

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Enhancing the Psychological and Social Development of Children in a Desegregated School Environment

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Introduction

This paper will present a brief overview of interventions which schools can use to enchance the psychological and social development of children in a desegregated school environment.

Psychological Development

Four remedies which can effectively enhance the psychological development of children are: (1) self-esteem, (2) achievement motivation, (3) coping or learned helplessness, and (4) aspirations for career and vocational awareness. Each of these conceptual areas will be addressed separately, utilizing a format

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which defines the concept and then presents specific interventions appropriate at the school or classroom level.

Self-Esteem

Middlebrook defines self-esteem as:

> People have general feelings about their own adequacy and their relative compentency. If a person feels that he is worthy, that he can ctonrol events, that his work is worthwhile, he is said to have a high level of self-esteem. In contrast, if a person feels that the work of others is better than his, that he doesn't count for much, and that his efforts usually produce poor results, his self-esteem is low The actual self is constantly, and unthinkingly, being measured against the ideal self. To the extent that the two match, the person feels good about himself and his abilities.[1]

This definition is appropriate as a reference point for the following suggestions. Specifically, seven interventions seem apropos to improving children's self-esteem and, thus, their psychological skill development. These seven interventions are:

(1) Reducing social comparisons between students in the classroom, especially black-white student comparisons if the classroom is bi-racial

(2) Reducing interpersonal competition among students, especially between black and white students if the classroom is bi-racial

(3) Creating learning situations such that students receive feedback indicative of proof to them that

they can achieve, which will lead them to have confidence in their performance

(4) Identifying individuals who constitute significant others to children and utilize their assistance to reinforce goal attainment which is directly related to school success

(5) Furnishing students with proper recognition, acceptance, and approval from the teacher when they perform effectively in the classroom and also creating situations in which children receive positive feedback from other students

(6) Teachers' use of corrective feeback in a positive manner when interacting with students so that the students do not perceive that they are being punished for inappropriate behavior, but rather are being furnished with suggestions and reinforcement relative to how to perform effectively

(7) Demonstrating to students the need for school success and the relationship between school success and other areas of their lives in which they place an importance upon achievement, such as: relationships with significant others, athletics, jobs, career aspirations, and peer relationships.

Achievement Motivation

Achievement motivation refers to a student's skills to select and persist at tasks which will challenge the student's competencies. It is the drive which students demonstrate to actualize their potential. Students who possess high achievement motivation take pride in successfully accomplishing tasks, seek challenging tasks and opportunities, and hold high but realistic aspirations. Students who possess a high degree of achievement motivation are more likely to demonstrate hard work on school tasks and, thus, improve their skills.[2/]

The following six interventions focus on enhancing students' achievement motivation:

(1) Structuring classroom experiences so that students feel responsible for their actions

(2) Utilizing instructional techniques which employ moderate, but challenging, goal setting for students

(3) Emphasizing to students positive identity with achievement success

(4) Demonstrating to students how successful achievers perform by the utilization of significant others and role models

(5) Creating challenging situations for student which build upon existing competencies

(6) Positively reinforcing competent achievement for students based on their past level of performance.

Coping or Learned Helplessness

Coping or learned helplessness refers to the general skills or ability of an individual to overcome adversity. Abramson, Seligman, and Teasdale, in their review of the traditional theories of learned helplessness, indicate that such a condition exists when an individual expects that outcomes are uncontrollable. The perceived uncontrollableness of the situation prompts a deficit in the motivation of the individual to even try to affect the outcome. Abramson, Seligman, and Teasdale offer a reformulation of the traditional learned helplessness theory. They state:

> In brief, we argue that when a person finds that he is helpless, he asks why he is helpless. The casual attribution he makes then determines the generality and chronicity of his helplessness deficits as well as his later self-esteem.[3]

The following five interventions can be utilized in the classroom to develop coping skills in youngsters to remediate learned helplessness:

(1) Utilizing learning activities, as simple as these may appear to the teacher, on which students can initially demonstrate accomplishment and achievement

(2) Reducing the emphasis on the negative aspects of failure and emphasizing the positive attributes

of successful achievement to students

(3) Reducing comparisons among students, especially when youngsters who have failed are used as examples or reference points for comparison

(4) Stressing to children that they can have control over what happens to them and to their outcomes

(5) Utilizing motivational techniques which will prompt youngsters to take the initiative to again begin to try to achieve learning outcomes.

Vocational and Career Awareness and Aspirations

Vocational and career awareness and aspirations pertain to the development of challenging and realistic vocational and career plans of students. It is extremely important that students, while still in school, prepare themselves for vocations and careers when they leave school. The fact that the unemployment rate for teenagers and young adults in this country is disproportionately high is substatiation of the need for schools to effectively assist students in planning their vocations and careers for the future.

The following seven interventions presented can be utilized to enhance the career and vocational aspirations of students:

(1) Demonstrating to students the relationship between schoolwork and job and career requirements in relationship to their aspirations

(2) Presenting vocational, career, and job-related areas in relationship to the subject matter students are experiencing, on a daily basis, in the classroom in order to make classroom experiences be perceived as more meaningful and worthwhile to students

(3) Ascertaining students' interests and relating their interests to vocational and career aspirations

(4) Stressing achievement motivation to students and the necessity to have the skills necessary to accomplish and master certain prerequisites in order to be able to pursue a vocational or career area

(5) Emphasizing to secondary students that adult life is really not that far away and that when they become adults, economic responsibility will be placed on them for self support. An emphasis should be placed on developing transitions skills for students so that when they leave high school there can be a smooth transition to whatever they pursue at the post-high school level

(6) Indicating to students that the results of effective performance in employment as adults can have a direct effect on personal happiness and self-worth

(7) Stressing to students that each person has attributes that, properly coupled with training and aspirations, can lead to a successful adult vocational and career life in the realm of employment.

Social Skills Development

Social skills development pertains to the need for black children to demonstrate skills which will facilitate effective interaction with others. This is similar to what Middlebrook refers to as initiation and socialization.[4/] Effective interaction for children pertains to contact with adults in the school setting, such as teachers and principals, and especially to contact with other children. Effective social skills will result in children reducing their hostilities toward others and self and will prompt children to view themselves as important members of the classroom's social structure. This should also result in enhanced self-esteem.

Specific interventions which can be utilized to address social skills development for children are:

(1) Reducing competition between students when it can lead to negative relationships

(2) Teachers, the principal, and other school personnel demonstrating a concern for all students, as people, and encouraging students to demonstrate such concern for each other

(3) Encouraging all students to cooperate with each other and the teacher, with the teacher demonstrating by example how cooperation with others can be more productive and enjoyable for everyone involved

(4) Reducing or eliminating social subgroups in the classroom which may result in outgroups

(5) Emphasizing to students that individual differences are a part of each person and that people should not treat another person negatively because he/she may be perceived as different

(6) Structuring classroom such that aggression and hostility are reduced among students and between the teacher and students, with a special emphasis on reducing aggression and hostility on the basis of subgroups

(7) Teachers emphasizing that all people in our society, including children, need to care and be sensitive to the feelings of other people. This represents a general emphasis on a humanitarian or moral education.

Footnotes

1/ P.N. Middlebrook. Social Psychology and Modern Life. Alfred A. Knopf; New York, 1974 (p. 69).

2/ M.L. Maehr. "Culture and Achievement Motivation," American Psychologist, Vol. 29, 1974.

3/ L.Y. Abramson, M.E.P. Seligman, and J.D. Teasdale. "Learned Helplessness in Humans: Critique and Reformation." Journal of Abnormal Psychology, Vol. 87, 1978 (p. 50).

4/ P.N. Middlebrook. Social Psychology and Modern Life. Alfred A. Knopf; New York, 1974.

School Integration Practices*

The six school practices listed below have been identified as having a positive relationship to race relations at the high school level. Furthermore, these practices are "alterable", the school can have an impact on these practices.

1. Racial Mixing: The extent to which students of different racial and national origin minority groups associate in learning, social, and recreational activities.

2. Racial Fairness: The extent to which students perceive that people of different race and national origin minority groups are treated equally in the school.

3. Staff Support for Integration: The extent to which students perceive that their teachers and administrators promote supportive interracial association, and acknowledge and deal effectively with race and national origin minority differences.

4. Security: The extent to which students feel safe in and around the school in their associations with students of different race and national origin minority backgrounds.

5. Staff Modeling: The extent to which adequate ratios of white and minority adults make up the school staff and associate openly, cooperatively, and with equal status.

6. Multicultural Exposure: The extent to which students study and discuss unique and common aspects of the history and culture of various race and national origin minority groups.

*From: W.J. Genova and H.J. Walberg. Enhancing Integration In Urban High Schools. National Institute of Education, U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C., 1981.

School Climate Characteristics

The thirteen school climate characteristics listed below have been identified as having a positive relationship to effective integration at the high school level. These factors are also "alterable", the school can have an impact on these characteristics.

1. Involvement: The extent of school members' interest and participation in learning, social, and other school activities.

2. Accessibility and Receptivity: The availability and openness of school members to conversation, and assistance about concerns.

3. Learning Orientation: The extent to which learning and acquiring academic, vocational, and interpersonal skills are emphasized in the school.

4. Community: The level of friendship and mutual support school members feel toward each other.

5. Dealing with Problems: The extent of identifying, analyzing, and resolving school problems when they arise.

6. Equal Treatment: The uniformity of school members' opportunities and treatment in the school.

7. Groupings: The extent to which group membership is a positive or negative experience in the school.

8. Expressiveness: The extent of originality and open expression of ideas and feelings among school members.

9. Goal Direction: The extent to which school members understand and accept what they are expected to accomplish, and are provided a framework for focusing their efforts.

10. Influence Distribution: The extent to which school members contribute to decisions regarding rules, procedures, and options.

11. Options: The extent of choices available to school members regarding goals, courses, levels of challenge, and social opportunity.

12. Order: The extent to which school rules, established to maintain favorable learning conditions, reflect established legal procedures and are accepted by school members.

13. Challenge: The level of difficulty of school members' goals and tasks, and the pace of effort required.

Nine-Step Improvement Process

Listed below is a nine-step improvement process for implementing the six school practices and thirteen school climate characteristics. This process is to be carried out by a student-staff-parent team that works with the school administration and established student, teacher, and parent groups and organizations.

1. Take the Initiative: Someone in the school, whether student, teacher, administrator, school board member, or parent, must take the lead in initiating a school improvement effort. If a lasting impact is desired, the chances of success will be increased by working through the existing representative groups in the school: the student and faculty associations, the administration, the school board, and the parent association.

2. Form a Representative School Improvement Team: The improvement effort should be guided by an 8- to 12- member team of student, teacher, parent, community, and administrator representatives. To ensure maximum consideration of all important issues, the school improvement effort should broadly and genuinely represent the major formal and informal groupings of the whole school community.

3. Develop a Team Work Plan: A detailed work plan for the team, to be shared with the entire school community, should be developed. The work plan should include, at a minimum, tasks, responsibilities, and a timetable.

4. Set a Clear Purpose: The team should set for itself a clear purpose and outline procedures for collecting and analyzing data that will help the team achieve this purpose. The team may wish to study fully the six school practices and 13 school climate characteristics previously discussed and to select a purpose or purposes from among the options described in that discussion.

5. Collect Assessment Data: Some method of collecting school data must be developed and implemented. This could involve a questionnaire administered to school members and scored according to set procedure.

6. Analyze and Interpret Assessment Results: The school team can analyze its results singly, or in relation to the norms developed from the sample used in the study described in chapter 3 of this monograph. The team can follow up on questionnaires with interviews and observations to extend and refine its school diagnosis.

7. Develop a School Improvement Plan: Based on the results of the completed assessment, the team can formulate goals and action steps for school improvement.

8. Implement the School Improvement Plan: Once the plan has been ratified with the existing representative groups, it can be implemented according to the preplanned action steps.

9. Evaluate the Effort's Impact on the School: Progress in implementing the school improvement plan and its impact on improving the school should be evaluated periodically.

Table 1

Selected Factors That Are
Productive of Learning*

Factor	Number of Positive Studies of Results	Total Number of Studies of Results	Percent Positive
Amount of Study (Time on Task)	24	25	96%
Systematic Curricula	44	45	98%
Mastery Learning Programs	29	30	97%
Teacher Qualities**	50	57	88%
School and Class Morale	620	732	85%
Home Support	86	86	100%
Home Teaching	16	17	94%

*From: H.J. Walberg, D. Schiller, and G.D. Haertel. "The Quiet Revolution in Educational Research." Kappan, November, 1979.

**i.e., clear expectations, enthusiastic, flexible, "businesslike", avoid excessive negative criticism.